

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES**

In re Application of: Mark A. FELKEY et al.	
Application No.: 10/051,282	Confirmation No.: 7571
Filed: January 22, 2002	Group Art Unit: 3627
Attorney Docket: WMA01001	Examiner: Thein, M.
Client Docket: 09710_1116	

For: METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROCURING TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES
ON-LINE

APPEAL BRIEF

Honorable Commissioner for Patents
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Sir:

This Appeal Brief is submitted in support of the Notice of Appeal dated October 9, 2007.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

Verizon Corporation is the real party in interest.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

Appellants are aware of one related appeal. There has been an appeal in related application Serial No. 10/051,180. The status, according to Public PAIR, as of October 17, 2007, is that the Appeal brief has been entered and forwarded to the Examiner as of September 14, 2007.

III. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-15, 17, 21-23, 27-30, 32-36, 40, and 41 are pending in this appeal, in which claims 16, 18-20, 24-26, and 31 have earlier been canceled, and claims 37-39 have been earlier withdrawn. No claim is allowed. This appeal is therefore taken from the final rejection of claims 1-15, 17, 21-23, 27-30, 32-36, 40, and 41 on February 9, 2007.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

All amendments to the claims have been entered by the Examiner. The current claims on appeal are shown in the appendix attached hereto.

V. SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention addresses problems associated with enhancing a customer's experience in procuring telecommunication services.

Independent claim 1 provides for the following:

1. A computer-implemented method for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:

receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application, the procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from a plurality of offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶¶ [08], [09], [14]);

providing an option for accessing a network consultant via instant messaging (see, e.g., Specification, ¶¶ [60], [61]);

generating procurement data in response to the procurement inquiry (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶ [09]); and

transmitting the procurement data to the customer application (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶ [09]).

Independent claim 12 provides for the following:

12. A computer-implemented method for servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:

receiving an inquiry from a customer application, the inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for one of a plurality of telecommunications offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with a user of the customer application (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [09]); and

generating response data in response to the inquiry and pertaining to the search criteria (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [09]); and

transmitting the response data to the customer application (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [09]).

Independent claim 21 provides for the following:

21. A computer-implemented method for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:

submitting an inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from among a voice service offering, a data access offering and a mobile telecommunications offering (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [08]);

establishing an instant messaging session with a customer service personnel (see, e.g., Specification, ¶¶ [60], [61]); and

receiving procurement data (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [09]),

wherein the procurement data is generated in response to the inquiry and pertains to the selected telecommunications offering (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [09]).

Independent claim 27 provides for the following:

27. A system for procuring and servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:

a customer browser loaded on a customer client computer, the customer browser being configured to submit a procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from among a voice service offering, a data access service offering and a mobile telecommunications offering (see, e.g., Fig. 5b, Specification, ¶ [13]);

a back office browser loaded on a back office client computer, the back office browser being configured to submit a service inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for a telecommunications offering, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with the customer client computer (see, e.g., Fig. 5b, Specification, ¶ [13]); and

a server program loaded on a server computer and being configured to receive the procurement and service inquiries, generate procurement data pertaining the to the selected telecommunications offering and service data pertaining to the search criteria, and transmit the procurement and service data (see, e.g., Fig. 5b, Specification, ¶ [13]).

Independent claim 35 provides for the following:

35. An apparatus for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:

means for receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application, the procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service (see, e.g., Specification, ¶ [08]);

means for providing an option for accessing a network consultant via instant messaging (see, e.g., Specification, ¶¶ [60], [61]);

means for receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application (see, e.g., Figs. 3, 5a, Specification, ¶ [54]); and

means for transmitting the procurement data to the customer application (see, e.g., Fig. 5a, Specification, ¶¶ [55], [56]).

Independent claim 36 provides for the following:

36. An apparatus for servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:

means for receiving an inquiry from a customer application, the inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for one of a plurality of telecommunications offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with a user of the customer application (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶¶ [09]-[11]);

means for generating response data in response to the inquiry and pertaining to the search criteria (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶¶ [10], [11]); and

means for transmitting the response data to the customer application (see, e.g., Fig. 3, Specification, ¶ [10]).

Independent claim 40 provides for the following:

40. A method for electronic provisioning of telecommunication services, the method comprising:

providing a plurality of options to communicate with a consultant during the provisioning, wherein the options include instant messaging and on-line shared white-boarding, wherein the option is displayed via a customer application to a user (see, e.g., Fig. 5a, Specification, ¶¶ [54], [55]);

receiving input from the customer application, the input specifying one or more selections of a plurality of telecommunication products (see, e.g., Fig. 5a, Specification, ¶ [56]);

determining whether the selection is valid during the provisioning (see, e.g., Fig. 5a, Specification, ¶¶ [56]-[60]); and

generating an order for the selection based on the determining step (see, e.g., Fig. 5a, Specification, ¶¶ [56]-[60]).

VI. GROUND OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

Whether claims 1-4, 7-15, 17, 21-23, 35, and 36 are obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Liljestrand et al.* (US 6,853,714) in view of *Bednarek* (US 6,965,868)?

Whether claims 5 and 6 are obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Liljestrand et al.* (US 6,853,714) and *Bednarek* (US 6,965,868) in view of *Guidice et al.* (US 6,463,420)?

Whether claims 27-30 and 32-34 are obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Liljestrand et al.* (US 6,853,714) in view of *Sridhar et al.* (US 6,098,108)?

Whether claims 40 and 41 are obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103 based on *Liljestrand et al.* (US 6,853,714) in view of *Bansal* (US 6,788,949)?

VII. ARGUMENT**A. CLAIMS 1-4, 7-15, 17, 21-23, 35, AND 36 ARE NOT RENDERED OBVIOUS BY *LILJESTRAND ET AL.* AND *BEDNAREK ET AL.*, BECAUSE NEITHER REFERENCE DISCLOSES THE CLAIMED PROCUREMENT FEATURES WHEREIN THERE IS A PROCUREMENT INQUIRY, A GENERATION OF PROCUREMENT DATA AND A TRANSMISSION OF THE PROCUREMENT DATA**

Taking independent claim 1 as exemplary, the Examiner contends that *Liljestrand et al.* teaches the claimed subject matter, but for an explicit disclosure of providing an option for accessing a network consultant via instant messaging. The Examiner turns to *Bednarek* for such a teaching, referring to col. 10, lines 50-53, col. 11, lines 64-66, and col. 14, lines 46-49. The Examiner then concludes that it would have been obvious to modify *Liljestrand et al.* to provide the option of accessing a network consultant via instant messaging, as taught by *Bednarek*, “in order to engage in real time dialogue (Bednarek, col. 11, lines 64-65) and provide intensive interaction and customized information with the customer (Bednarek, col. 14, lines 48-49)” (Final Action of February 9, 2007 – page 3).

The initial burden of establishing a *prima facie* basis to deny patentability to a claimed invention under any statutory provision always rests upon the Examiner. *In re Mayne*, 104 F.3d 1339, 41 USPQ2d 1451 (Fed. Cir. 1997); *In re Deuel*, 51 F.3d 1552, 34 USPQ2d 1210 (Fed. Cir. 1995); *In re Bell*, 991 F.2d 781, 26 USPQ2d 1529 (Fed. Cir. 1993); *In re Oetiker*, 977 F.2d 1443, 24 USPQ2d 1443 (Fed. Cir. 1992). In rejecting a claim under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the Examiner is required to provide a factual basis to support the obviousness conclusion. *In re Warner*, 379 F.2d 1011, 154 USPQ 173 (CCPA 1967); *In re Lunsford*, 357 F.2d 385, 148 USPQ 721 (CCPA 1966); *In re Freed*, 425 F.2d 785, 165 USPQ 570 (CCPA 1970).

While Appellants do not deny that *Bednarek* teaches the use of instant messaging in an online retail environment, the problem with the Examiner's rejection is that *Liljestrand et al.* fails to teach the other claimed elements, as alleged by the Examiner.

Again, taking claim 1 as exemplary, the Examiner asserts that *Liljestrand et al.* teaches the feature of "receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application, the procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from a plurality of offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service" at col. 2, lines 44-48, col. 3, lines 45-59; col. 4, lines 46-61, col. 5, lines 2-3, and col. 9, lines 20-34.

Col. 2, lines 44-48 of the reference recites the following:

...providing a plurality of enhanced telecommunications services to a subscriber by using a voice-activated interface to enable the subscriber to access at least one of the plurality of enhanced telecommunications services.

Col. 3, lines 45-59 of the reference describes the elements of Fig. 2 illustrating an enhanced services platform 100 located within a traditional public telephone network. The enhanced services platform 100 is implemented on an enhanced local exchange that integrates a variety of revenue-generating enhanced services such as pre- and post-paid calling services, voice activated subscriber services, and various forms of messaging via the enhanced services platform.

Col. 4, lines 46-61 of the reference relates to the types of services provided by the enhanced services platform 100: 1. basic local service, 2. virtual office phone (basic), and 3. virtual office services (advanced). The basic local service corresponds to the traditional home service of a basic dial tone, access to long distance, and a few other features. The virtual office phone (basic) service includes voice-activated and web-activated interfaces and the features of a. call waiting, b. call transfer, c. call forwarding, d. call swapping, e. call disconnect, f. sequential calling, g. voice dialing by number, and h. redial. The virtual office phone (advanced) adds to the

virtual office phone (basic) the features of i. Caller ID, j. Caller ID history, k. conferencing features (on demand, meet me); and l. contact list/dialing by name.

Col. 5, lines 2-3, of the reference describes unified messaging voice mail features such as “forward, reply, callback, phone or Internet (multimedia) retrieval and networking services.”

Col. 9, lines 20-34, of the reference relates to a description of Fig. 5, illustrating a plurality of different networks and subscriber equipment that can interface with the enhanced local exchange via the public telephone network. The subscriber can connect via a wireless phone, a voice over Internet protocol network using an IP phone or computer, or a remote access link, e.g., via PDA.

All of these cited portions of *Liljestrand et al.* disclose access by a user to a plurality of different telecommunication services. However, these passages do **not** disclose a **procurement inquiry by a customer application**, as recited by claims 1 and 35, or an **inquiry from a customer application**, as in claims 12 and 36, or an **inquiry**, as in claim 21.

With regard to “generating procurement data in response to the procurement inquiry” (e.g., claim 1), the Examiner cites the abstract, col. 2, lines 42-51, and col. 15, lines 7-45, of *Liljestrand et al.*, while citing the same portions of the reference for a teaching of the claimed feature of “transmitting the procurement data to the customer application.”

The col. 2 portion relates to an enhanced services platform, as described above. The col. 15 portion relates to a description of various call functions that can be performed. However, there is absolutely no disclosure therein of any “procurement data,” generation of that procurement data, “procurement inquiry,” or transmission of any procurement data to a customer application. None of these claimed features is taught or suggested by either *Liljestrand et al.* or *Bednarek*.

The Examiner explains, in the Advisory Action of May 7, 2007, at page 2, that he considers a subscriber using a computer or a PDA to connect to the enhanced local exchange (ELE) to be the claimed “customer application” and the “virtual administrator” (col. 4, lines 18-23) of *Liljestrand et al.* to be the claimed “receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application.” With all due respect, the Examiner has given an unduly broad and unreasonable interpretation to the instant claimed features.

The claimed inquiries are from a “customer application,” which, even in its broadest sense, would not be the subscriber, *per se*, but rather a “customer **application**,” which might, for example, include software, as a browser at a customer/client computer. However, more importantly, the instant claims on appeal relate to **procurement** and **procurement inquiries**, wherein **procurement data** is generated and transmitted to the customer **application**.

Liljestrand et al. is directed to providing various telecommunication services, but is not concerned with the **procurement** end of those services. The reference describes how various call functions are performed, etc., but is silent about customers inquiring as to how to **procure** those services. There is nothing within the disclosure of *Liljestrand et al.* related to a **procurement inquiry from a customer application**. It is not necessarily disputed that customers using the system of *Liljestrand et al.* have procured certain services and, at some earlier time, may have inquired about those services prior to the purchase, but *Liljestrand et al.* makes no mention of the **procurement** procedure or any **procurement inquiry from a customer application**. Hence, the reader is not informed as to any specific computer-implemented method for procuring telecommunications offerings in *Liljestrand et al.* To whatever extent the system of *Liljestrand et al.* might use some kind of procurement procedure to let its customers know of certain products

and services, there is no disclosure of such a procedure and certainly no disclosure of Appellants' very specific claimed procedure.

While instant claims 12 and 36 do not recite "procurement," it is clear from the language about "an **order** for one of a plurality of telecommunications offerings," that the claimed method is directed to ordering, or procuring, telecommunication services. *Liljestrand et al.* does not relate to such "ordering" or "procurement" of telecommunication services, but rather only to the actual services themselves. Such a disclosure by *Liljestrand et al.* cannot disclose or suggest the very specific procurement methods and apparatus of the instant claims on appeal.

The "virtual administrator" of *Liljestrand et al.* cannot be the claimed feature of "receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application" because, as established, there is no disclosure in *Liljestrand et al.* of any type of **procurement**. The "virtual administrator" in *Liljestrand et al.* is associated with a voice-activated interface within the enhanced services platform 100. This "virtual administrator" assists the subscriber in **requesting**/performing all desired services via the voice-activated interface (col. 4, lines 19-23). To whatever extent this general disclosure of "requesting" (if that is what the Examiner relies on), might, somehow, be construed as a procurement inquiry (and Appellants contend that it cannot be so construed), there is no disclosure in *Liljestrand et al.* of the specifically claimed method steps and apparatus setting forth the manner of procuring the telecommunications offerings. The "request" in *Liljestrand et al.* appears to be a request relating to how to perform the services to which the customer already subscribes, and not a request as to the telecommunications offerings and how to procure one or a plurality of such services, as required by the instant claims.

Moreover, there is no "generating procurement data" in response to a procurement inquiry in *Liljestrand et al.* even if, *arguendo*, the "requesting" in *Liljestrand et al.* is considered to be a

procurement request. It is, at best, speculative as to the meaning of “requesting” at col. 4, line 21, of *Liljestrand et al.* A conclusion of obviousness cannot be based on speculation.

Accordingly, the Examiner has clearly failed to present a *prima facie* case of obviousness with regard to the subject matter of claims 1-4, 7-26, 35, and 36 and the Honorable Board is respectfully requested to reverse the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

B. CLAIMS 5 AND 6 ARE NOT RENDERED OBVIOUS BY *LIJESTRAND ET AL.*, *BEDNAREK* AND/OR *GUIDICE ET AL.* BECAUSE NONE OF THE APPLIED REFERENCES DISCLOSES THE CLAIMED PROCUREMENT FEATURES OF A PROCUREMENT INQUIRY, A GENERATION OF PROCUREMENT DATA AND A TRANSMISSION OF THE PROCUREMENT DATA.

Liljestrand et al. and *Bednarek* fail to disclose the claimed procurement features of a procurement inquiry, a generation of procurement data, and a transmission of the procurement data, for the reasons *supra*. In addition, claims 5 and 6 add the features of “transmitting the ordered data including at least one of shopping cart data, or order entry data” and “transmitting the post-sale data including at least one of order tracking data, or order status data,” respectively.

While *Guidice et al.* provides a general teaching of shopping cart data and tracking data in on-line commerce transactions, aside from impermissible hindsight gleaned from Appellants’ own disclosure, there would have been no reason to include such shopping cart data and/or tracking data in the system of *Liljestrand et al.* *Liljestrand et al.* is not at all concerned with on-line commerce, or ordering of anything. As noted, *Liljestrand et al.* relates to various telecommunication services and the performance of those services, but is absolutely silent with respect to procuring, or ordering, of those services. Consequently, the skilled artisan would not have been led to modify to the *Liljestrand et al.* system to include shopping cart data and/or

tracking data. There is no factual basis to include this data in *Liljestrand et al.* because *Liljestrand et al.* is not concerned with selling anything.

Because there is no cogent reason for making the proposed combination, no *prima facie* case of obviousness has been established by the Examiner with regard to the subject matter of claims 5 and 6 (which are patentable apart from independent claim 1 from which they depend). Accordingly, the Honorable Board is respectfully requested to reverse the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

C. CLAIMS 27-30 AND 32-34 ARE NOT RENDERED OBVIOUS BY LIJESTRAND ET AL., BEDNAREK AND/OR SRIDHAR ET AL. BECAUSE NONE OF THE APPLIED REFERENCES DISCLOSES THE CLAIMED PROCUREMENT FEATURES OF A PROCUREMENT INQUIRY, A GENERATION OF PROCUREMENT DATA AND A TRANSMISSION OF PROCUREMENT DATA.

Liljestrand et al. and *Bednarek* fail to disclose the claimed features of a procurement inquiry, a generation of procurement data, and a transmission of the procurement data, for the reasons *supra*. *Sridhar et al.* is applied by the Examiner for a customer browser loaded on a customer client computer, a back office browser loaded on a back office client computer, a server program communicating according to a communication protocol architecture that includes a web layer and application layer; a database layer, and a site intelligence server. However, *Sridhar et al.* fails to provide for the deficiencies of the principal references, noted *supra*. Accordingly, the proposed combination of references fails to teach all of the features set forth in independent claim 27.

Moreover, the proposed combination suggested by the Examiner is without factual support. The Examiner offers only a generalized reason for the combination: “in order to provide

enhanced communication between client and server computers coupled through the internet” (Final Action of February 9, 2007 – bottom of page 8). However, the customer browser loaded on a customer client computer, the back office browser loaded on a back office client computer, and the server program recited in independent claim 27 all relate to the claimed procurement feature. These claimed elements are interconnected to submit a procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering, to submit a service inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for a telecommunications offering, and for receiving procurement and service inquiries, etc. Since *Liljestrand et al.* is not concerned with procurement, or ordering, as noted *supra*, there would have been no possible reason, within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 103, for modifying *Liljestrand et al.* by including a customer browser “being configured to submit a **procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering,**” or a back office browser “being configured to submit a **service inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for a telecommunications offering,**” or a server program “being configured to receive **the procurement and service inquiries,** generate **procurement data pertaining...to the selected telecommunications offering** and service data **pertaining to the search criteria,** and transmit the **procurement and service data.**”

Thus, the combination proposed by the Examiner would not have been made as there would have been nothing in the applied references that would have led one of ordinary skill in the art to modify *Liljestrand et al.* and/or *Bednarek* with any teaching of *Sridhar et al.* Accordingly, no *prima facie* case of obviousness has been established by the Examiner with regard to the subject matter of claims 27-30 and 32-34. Therefore, the Honorable Board is respectfully requested to reverse the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

D. CLAIMS 40 AND 41 ARE NOT RENDERED OBVIOUS BY *LIJESTRAND ET AL.* AND *BANSAL* BECAUSE NEITHER OF THE APPLIED REFERENCES DISCLOSES THE CLAIMED GENERATION OF AN ORDER FOR THE SELECTION.

The Examiner employs *Bansal* for a teaching of instant messaging and on-line shared white-boarding. However, *Bansal* does not provide for the deficiencies of *Liljestrand et al.*, explained *supra*, regarding a lack of “ordering” a telecommunications service/product. Because *Liljestrand et al.* lacks any teaching or suggestion of generating an “order” for a selection of any of a plurality of telecommunications products (i.e., is not concerned with the specifics of electronic provisioning of telecommunications services), there is no technical basis for modifying *Liljestrand et al.* with a teaching of instant messaging or white-boarding in order to use instant messaging or white-boarding for provisioning purposes.

Therefore, no *prima facie* case of obviousness has been established by the Examiner with regard to the subject matter of claims 40 and 41. Accordingly, the Honorable Board is respectfully requested to reverse the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND PRAYER FOR RELIEF

For the foregoing reasons, Appellants request the Honorable Board to reverse each of the Examiner's rejections.

Respectfully Submitted,

DITTHAVONG MORI & STEINER, P.C.

March 22, 2008
Date

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IX. CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. A computer-implemented method for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:

receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application, the procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from a plurality of offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service;

providing an option for accessing a network consultant via instant messaging;

generating procurement data in response to the procurement inquiry; and

transmitting the procurement data to the customer application.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the procurement data includes at least one of pre-sale, ordering or post-sale data.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

transmitting the pre-sale data comprising value added content, the value added content including at least one of data for matching the selected telecommunication offering with needs of a customer, data for qualifying a customer for the selected telecommunications offering, data for an on-line demonstration of a process for procuring the selected telecommunications offering, or data for answers to technical questions.

4. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

transmitting post-sale data comprising value added content, the value added content including at least one of data for providing access to existing orders, data for providing electronic billing, data for sending of a page, data for scheduling of a conference call, data for on-line directory assistance, or tailored data on one of a telecommunications offering ordered or a related telecommunication offerings.

5. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

transmitting the ordering data including at least one of shopping cart data, or order entry data.

6. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

transmitting the post-sale data including at least one of order tracking data, or order status data.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the voice service offering to include a complete calling package telecommunications offering, a long distance telecommunications offering, a toll free telecommunications offering, a conferencing telecommunications offering, or a calling card telecommunications offering.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the data access service offering to include a dial up Internet telecommunications offering, or a dedicated Internet telecommunications offering.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the mobile telecommunications service offering to include a paging telecommunications offering, a conferencing telecommunications offering, a calling card telecommunications offering, or a dial up telecommunications offering.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the customer application provides a graphical user interface.

11. Computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in claim 1.

12. A computer-implemented method for servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:

receiving an inquiry from a customer application, the inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for one of a plurality of telecommunications offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with a user of the customer application; and

generating response data in response to the inquiry and pertaining to the search criteria;
and

transmitting the response data to the customer application.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the response data includes at least one of pre-sale information, ordering information, or post-sale information.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the response data includes information for establishing an instant messaging session with the customer agent.

15. The method of claim 13, further comprising:
transmitting the post-sale data including at least one of data for tracking an order, data for checking a status of an order, data for coordinating service for a telecommunications offering, or data for provisioning a telecommunications offering.

16. (Canceled)

17. Computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in claim 12.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Canceled)

20. (Canceled)

21. A computer-implemented method for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:

submitting an inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from among a voice service offering, a data access offering and a mobile telecommunications offering;

establishing an instant messaging session with a customer service personnel; and

receiving procurement data,

wherein the procurement data is generated in response to the inquiry and pertains to the selected telecommunications offering.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:

initiating the inquiry via a graphical user interface.

23. Computer-readable media distributed storing computer-executable instructions for performing the steps recited in claim 21.

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. A system for procuring and servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:

a customer browser loaded on a customer client computer, the customer browser being configured to submit a procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering from among a voice service offering, a data access service offering and a mobile telecommunications offering;

a back office browser loaded on a back office client computer, the back office browser being configured to submit a service inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for a telecommunications offering, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with the customer client computer; and

a server program loaded on a server computer and being configured to receive the procurement and service inquiries, generate procurement data pertaining the to the selected telecommunications offering and service data pertaining to the search criteria, and transmit the procurement and service data.

28. The system of claim 27, wherein the customer and back office browsers and the server program communicate according to a communication protocol architecture that includes a web layer and an application layer, the application layer including a presentation layer and a business and integration layer, the web layer being configured to include the server configured as a web server, the presentation layer being configured to receive requests and user actions from the server, the business and integration layer being configured to perform order management, online ordering and user management functions.

29. The system of claim 28, wherein the communication protocol architecture interfaces with a database layer configured to store data used by the system and a service availability tool coupled to the application layer,

the service availability tool being configured to provide a service availability function with respect to the selected telecommunications offering.

30. The system of claim 28, further comprising:
a site intelligence server coupled to the web server , the site intelligence server being configured to provide data mining capabilities to gather and report on metrics on the system.

31. (Canceled)

32. The system of claim 27, wherein providing the voice service offering to include a complete calling package telecommunications offering, a long distance telecommunications offering, a toll free telecommunications offering, a conferencing telecommunications offering, or a calling card telecommunications offering.

33. The system of claim 27, wherein the data access service offering to include a dial up Internet telecommunications offering, or a dedicated Internet telecommunications offering.

34. The system of claim 27, wherein the mobile telecommunications service offering to include a paging telecommunications offering, a conferencing telecommunications offering, a calling card telecommunications offering, or a dial up telecommunications offering.

35. An apparatus for procuring telecommunications offerings, comprising:
means for receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application, the procurement inquiry specifying a selected telecommunications offering including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service;

means for providing an option for accessing a network consultant via instant messaging;

means for receiving a procurement inquiry from a customer application; and

means for transmitting the procurement data to the customer application.

36. An apparatus for servicing telecommunications offerings, comprising:
means for receiving an inquiry from a customer application, the inquiry specifying a search criteria with respect to an order for one of a plurality of telecommunications offerings including voice service, data access service and mobile telecommunications service, wherein a customer agent assigned for servicing a telecommunications offering order is available via instant messaging with a user of the customer application;

means for generating response data in response to the inquiry and pertaining to the search criteria; and

means for transmitting the response data to the customer application.

37. A method for provisioning services via an on-line system, the method comprising:

transmitting a service inquiry from a user;

selectively directing the user to a service center;

selectively providing a plurality of service options to the user;
generating a service order based upon the step of selectively providing the plurality of service options; and
confirming the service order.

38. An on-line system for procuring services, the system comprising:
a presentation section configured to provide a graphical user interface to a user, the user providing service inquiry information;
a business section configured to perform business rules and transactions based upon the service inquiry information, the user being selectively directed to a service center; and
an interface section configured to facilitate access to data associated with the services and to interface with external systems for acquisition of the services.

39. An on-line system for procuring services, the system comprising:
means for transmitting a service inquiry from a user;
means for selectively directing the user to a service center;
means for selectively providing a plurality of service options to the user;
means for generating a service order based upon the plurality of service options; and
means for confirming the service order.

40. A method for electronic provisioning of telecommunication services, the method comprising:

providing a plurality of options to communicate with a consultant during the provisioning, wherein the options include instant messaging and on-line shared white-boarding, wherein the option is displayed via a customer application to a user;

receiving input from the customer application, the input specifying one or more selections of a plurality of telecommunication products;

determining whether the selection is valid during the provisioning; and

generating an order for the selection based on the determining step.

41. A method according to claim 40, wherein the customer application provides a web-based interface.

X. EVIDENCE APPENDIX

Appellants are unaware of any evidence that is required to be submitted in the present Evidence Appendix.

XI. RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

Appellants are unaware of any related proceedings that are required to be submitted in the present Related Proceedings Appendix.